DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 587 CE 085 525

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TITLE	Using Queer Knowledges To Build Inclusionary Pedagogy in Adult Education.
PUB DATE	2001-06-00
NOTE	7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Adult Education Research Conference (42nd, Lansing, MI, June 1-3, 2001).
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2001/2001grace.htm.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Access to Education; *Adult Education; Bisexuality; Emotional Development; Homophobia; *Homosexuality; Identification (Psychology); *Instructional Innovation; Nontraditional Education; Psychological Characteristics; Self Concept; *Sexual Identity; *Social Change; Social Isolation; *Transformative Learning; World Views
IDENTIFIERS	Marginalized Groups; Queer Theory; Transgression Behavior

ABSTRACT

Adult educators can use historical, cultural, and theoretical queer knowledges to build an alternative pedagogy focused on three themes. The first is engaging queer history and queer studies to transgress adult educational space. They can be used to construct and affirm a transgressive notion of queer as normal that counters a historical notion of straight as "the" marker of normal. Queer studies can inform transformative adult educational practices that involve communicative learning processes and critical analyses concerned with being, self-preservation, expectation, becoming, resistance, affiliation, and holistic living. The second theme is using queer knowledge as an antecedent to queer praxis/queer praxis as a site of learning. If knowledge is making sense of information and experiences, then queer knowledges must be the multiple ways that persons in the spectral community of queer 'Others' construct meaning in the face of what one knows. Queer knowledges constitute sites of learning and bases for queer praxis. As cultural work, queer praxis opens an in-between learning space in society. The third theme is deploying queer knowledges as political activities for social transformation. Queer knowledges that lead to queer actions have the capacity to empower the marginalized queer community with outcomes consonant with those posited as goals and objectives of adult education for personal and social transformation. (Contains 16 references.) (YLB)

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Using Queer Knowledges to Build Inclusionary Pedagogy in Adult Education

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This paper turns to queer history, theory, and studies to develop themes useful to adult educators who wish to build alternative pedagogies that explore issues of difference, inclusion, transgressive politics, knowledge production, and the inextricable link between culture and power.

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In this paper we use historical, cultural, and theoretical queer knowledges to build queer pedagogy as an alternative pedagogy that is focused on three themes: 1) engaging queer history and queer studies to transgress adult educational space; 2) using queer knowledge as an antecedent to queer praxis/queer praxis as a site of learning; and 3) deploying queer knowledges as political activities for social transformation. Our purpose in developing these themes is to expand contemporary parameters and possibilities for adult educational practice. Specifically, we aim to assist adult educators and learners to problematize social and cultural formations, including heteronormative adult education, that have historically relegated queer persons to a sociocultural hinterland where we are left to struggle with issues of being, self-preservation, expectation, becoming, resistance, and belonging. We want to build a queer pedagogy that transforms adult educational practice by affirming queer integrity. This affirmation involves recognizing, respecting, and fostering queer identities, differences, actions, identifications, and socialities. We situate our pedagogy within a postfoundational practice of adult education that interrogates the politics and meanings of identity and difference as part of a larger project to build cultural democracy and realize social justice. This contemporary queer project aims to invert the normal within a transformative practice that works to build communities where we rethink and honor difference in life, work, and learning spaces. We develop our three themes as follows.

Engaging Queer History and Queer Studies to Transgress Adult Educational Space

Historically in heterosexualizing culture and discourse, heterosexism and homophobia have been cultural expressions of a public pedagogy of negation, erasure, and violence that violates queer identities and assaults queer integrity (Grace & Benson, 2000). Tierney (1997) captures the sorry consequence for queer persons: "The widespread notion that heterosexuality is normal and that everything that is not heterosexual is somehow aberrant has placed queers in a constant existential state of questioning ourselves, our identity, and how we should act" (p. 39). Queer persons have challenged this notion with intense vigor since the 1970s. In the post-Stonewall era, we continue to build what Hill (1996) calls fugitive knowledges as an integral part of this cultural work. Fugitive knowledges are ways of knowing that have escaped the control of those who authorize and make legitimate the dominant heteronormative discourse. They include histories of queer persons/queerness and studies of queer culture, which are used

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to confront heterosexualizing pedagogy. Queer histories and queer studies indicate that the queer community has its own ontologies and epistemologies, its own constructions of what might be essential in particular times and spaces, and its own mechanisms that explore *how we know what we know* (Grace, in press). Queer knowledge producers are concerned with defending our interests and rights, and becoming political through a process of conscientization, rebellion, and resistance; we write a pedagogy of transgressive action. Thus fugitive knowledges transgress heteronormalized cultural life; they emphasize what queer life really feels like. From a postmodern perspective, they are contextual, relational, and dispositional knowledges that acknowledge their own partiality as they contest the anti-queer bias in concepts, ideas, and perspectives embodied and embedded in partial and privileged heteronormalized knowledges. They can be used to construct and affirm a transgressive notion of *queer as normal* that counters a historical notion of straight as *the* marker of normal against which queer sex and gender differences are to be gauged and judged.

The notion of queer as normal can inform alternative adult educational practices. Historically, queer persons have been border crossers who learn about being, acting, and affiliation outside the mainstream field in informal and nonformal learning arenas constituted in the gay lifeworld (Hill, 1996). We turn to these formerly hidden queer histories as we continue our cultural and political work to challenge heteronormal ways of naming, presenting, and representing queer persons in learning spaces and other sociocultural sites. We also turn to defamatory anti-queer mainstream histories in this work to invert the normal. For example, histories of queerness prior to the 1970s use the clinical term homosexuality to mark any queer sexual orientation as errant sexuality; they label heterosexuality only as an apparently normal way to be, to act, to become, and to belong in everyday life. Tierney and Dilley (1998) recount that pre-1970s literature about queerness "was framed in one of two ways: either by absence, or by defining the topic as deviant" (p. 50). They also recount that during the 1970s a new wave of research (albeit with a pervasive focus on assimilation or integration) investigated queer persons as *normal* human beings. This kind of research followed pivotal queer historical moments that include the Stonewall Riots in New York City's gay ghetto in 1969 and the removal of homosexuality from the American Psychological Association's list of pathologies in 1973.

Since the 1990s queer research has focused on heterosexism and homophobia, and the ways a heterosexualizing culture-power nexus perpetuates them. In pursuing this project, queer studies analyzes the experiences and voices of queer persons in terms of the cultural politics that shapes them. It takes up key questions: Why are there sex and gender outlaws in the first place? How does the culture-power nexus work to keep queer persons positioned as outlaws despite moves forward in legal and legislative arenas? Why don't we enjoy the rights and privileges of full citizenship? Why are we still not living in communities of difference where we are safe and secure? As we deliberate these questions we ought to begin by problematizing the concept queer, which Gamson (2000) situates as "a more vexed, conflict-ridden and confusing term, both as identity and disciplinary marker" (p. 349). He indicates that, as an identity marker, queer has been expanded politically to include an inconstant spectrum of sex and gender outlaws so that the frequently repeated queer litany – lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender – is no longer inclusive enough. He suggests that, as a disciplinary marker, queer is used in a "more

distinctive sense, as a marker of the instability of identity" (p. 349). Thus understood, these markers attest to the erroneous nature of the homosexual/heterosexual binary that has functioned historically to leave certain queer persons out and to contour larger sociocultural sites like mainstream adult education as exclusionary environments for queer persons.

As it takes up culture-and-power questions, queer studies explores matters of context, disposition, relationship, and language that shape heteronormative culture and the queer counterculture that variously contests and resists it. In this light, queer studies can inform transformative adult educational practices that involve communicative learning processes and critical analyses concerned with being, self-preservation, expectation, becoming, resistance, affiliation, and holistic living. On a macro-level, adult educators can investigate and expose institutional and structural aspects of adult education that support and maintain heterosexualizing discourses and heteronormative learning climates to the detriment of the queer educators and learners it disenfranchises. On a micro-level, adult educators can strategize and develop policies, programs, courses, and activities that problematize anti-queer perspectives, initiatives, symbols, and language in a heterosexualizing culture-power nexus.

Queer Knowledges as Antecedents to Queer Praxis/Queer Praxis as a Site of Learning

The term knowledge, while not easily defined, is freely employed in education. If knowledge is, at least in part, making sense of information and our experiences, then *queer knowledges* must be the multiple ways that persons in the spectral community of queer Others construct meaning in the face of what we know. In this sense, queer knowledges constitute sites of learning and bases for queer praxis. They help build inclusionary pedagogy by challenging hierarchies, suspending classifications, and resisting dichotomization in regard to modes of intelligibility (ways of understanding the world). Acknowledging complex subjectivities, queer knowledges reject sorting, arranging, organizing, and systematizing identities. Not only has the modernist project employed binaries as entrées into ways of understanding the world, but it has also tended to assign opposing values to each component of a dualism. Queer praxis, which is built on queer knowledges, contests such privileging of male over female, straight over gay, and private acts over public ones. It works to dissolve such binaries, and it resists either/or analyses. Queer praxis also challenges and reconstructs the meaning of conducting oneself with *proper comportment*. It rejects the truth claim that legitimate policies and norms arise only from certain inscriptions of *reality* since queer experience can lead to a reading of truth claims as perilous myths while acting freely can create opportunities for learning from a new (queer) location. Thus queer praxis, shown to be a site of learning in adulthood, offers potential for personal development (Hill, 1996). It offers possibilities for self-reinforcement and for queer persons to write themselves into an alien world. Queer knowledge undergirds this praxis as we move beyond historical positions of voicelessness where our experiences have been unheard and unwelcome.

Queer knowledges trouble the one-dimensional humanism that has been the coin of the realm in education since its formation as a unified field of study. The familiar humanistic algorithm claims that the right use of reason produces truth and knowledge, which in turn are the authentic bases for value judgments, social norms, policies, and

practice. Queer experiences raise a challenge to this notion and queer practice subverts it. Like other postfoundational theoretical and political positions that include feminist, critical postmodern, and postcolonial theories, queer conceptions work against humanism's authorizations and exclusions (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000). They open up possibilities for actions that interrogate, celebrate, and acknowledge difference as fundamental to humanity. Central to this study of difference is querying categories. For example, transsexual queer women and men engage in the dissolution of the boundaries constituting *male* and *female*, while transgender queer persons disrupt the social construction of what it means to be a *woman* or a *man*. Thus queer being and queer doing produce learning opportunities for richer understandings of human sexuality; they also politicize them. For instance, self-identified queer lesbians may have sex with straight men, and straight-identified men may engage in sex acts with other men in a controversial condition named *heteroflexible* (Essig, 2000). In this sense, queer identity may mean entering a *bi-curious* space. Too, expressions of the erotic, affectional conduct, and personal endearment behavior – often deemed *private acts* in mainstream social norms – are often expressed publicly by members of the queer community. These expressions confront assumptions, beliefs, and values that some would prefer not knowing. Yet they restore sexual desire and rehabilitate erotic pleasure as essential to the human person. Moreover, they pry open possibilities that (re)make the world in more complicated ways than the flat renditions narrated by heterosexism and homophobia. In this light, queer being/queer doing can impel the non-queer Other to learn also.

As cultural work, queer praxis – being queer/doing queer – opens an in-between learning space in society. From this location, adults, having internalized hegemonic practices acquired in the classroom and in everyday life dominated by heterocentric discourses, learn to shatter patterns of self-alienation. This involves transgressing a history of formal learning in which "performance of...openly gay and lesbian students is critically determined by their perceptions that mastery of school knowledge entails self-estrangement" (Aronowitz, 1992, p. 182). A turn to queer knowledges is useful here. They help to open up new performative spaces where society's sexual fugitives can encounter and validate their complex selves as they confront a hostile heterocentric world. Queer knowledges can proffer a location where identities grow. They enable learners to challenge heterosexualizing discourses and heteronormative ways of being, doing, becoming, and belonging. In doing so they situate queer performance as an alternative pedagogy that often forms new directions for personal development as it cuts across themes of postmodernity such as diversity, identity, representation, audience, textuality, body image/consciousness, and self-definition.

Deploying Queer Knowledges as Political Activities for Social Transformation

The thread that links learning to social justice has a long and venerable history in adult education. Starting with Dewey (1964) and the progressives of the 1920s, the goals of education have been couched in social terms. Lindeman focused on adult education as the most reliable instrument for social action, and he wrote that all successful adult-education groups eventually become social-action collectives (Lindeman, 1926/1961; Brookfield, 1987). Bergevin (1967) perceived education as fostering democratic ideals, and Blakely (1967) pronounced that education leads the individual to a better, more fulfilling personal life while making the world a better place to live. Queer knowledges

that lead to queer actions have the capacity to empower the marginalized queer community with outcomes consonant with those posited as goals and objectives of adult education for personal and social transformation. Constituting both oppositional discourses and practices, they can be used to build inclusionary pedagogy in adult education. Of course, *queer* does not involve fixed essences or rigid truth claims. Rather, it is a concept with complex dimensions that can inform adult education in (re)new(ed) and vigorous ways.

Žižek (1991) suggests that it is the task of educators to *look awry*. We argue that it is also the task of learners; queer persons/learners offer a model for this aslant interrogation. Queer knowledges can help to build queer pedagogies that peer sideways and raise questions about how adult education is embedded in/in bed with the colonizer. They disrupt the powerful and lethal heteronormative systems that communicate and educate to relegate sex and gender outlaws to the position of outsider. Deploying queer meanings and knowledges in order to peer sideways permits radical inclusiveness and opens a space for political activities for personal and social transformation.

Queer life in critical public space not only interjects transgressive subject matter into contemporary social discourse, but it also intervenes and disrupts dominant power. Queer pedagogy makes learning a part of the process of social change itself. The queer movement has shifting, multiple, and overlapping sites of adult education (Hill, 1995). These sites textualize everyday life, contest hetero-hegemony, resist readings that exclude or defame queers, allow the development of oppositional practice, and make possible the embrace of commitment to social change in an environment of hope and possibility. Furthermore, they confront silence and marginalization as well as heteronormative structures, institutions, and texts in an effort to create a just society, equitable communities, and ethical accountability.

Queer knowledges inform the practical and political questions that adult educators need to ask during the tasks of deconstructing exclusionary forms of adult education and constructing inclusionary pedagogies. How does adult education function? Where do we find its various forms? How are they produced? Who regulates them? How is the teaching-learning interaction framed, executed, evaluated, and circulated in the intersections of sexual orientation and other relationships of power? How is this interaction impacted by the workings of the dominant culture-power nexus? Queer knowledges provide information and insights to those who take up these questions. They suggest ways to query truth claims, generate unruly perspectives, impeach what appears to be innocent, and probe hidden normative assumptions as actions for social and cultural change. They open paths to educational pedagogies that are democratic, unsettling and unsettled, dynamic, inclusive, transgressive, and perhaps most importantly, transformative.

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